Volume 1, Issue 7   Atari Online News, Etc.   April 16, 1999

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A-ONE #0107   04/16/99

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It's still just a tad less than Spring-like around New England these days.
Another 10 degrees warmer and I'll be happy; I'm looking forward to getting
out in the garden and doing other yard work although our two dogs have
really done a number on the lawn! It's going to take some work...

I had an extremely bad week. It's been bad enough that the hospital/clinic
where I work recently installed some new systems still don't work properly
after over a month and is wreaking havoc on day-to-day operations for most
of the facility, causing a lot of extra needless work and man-hours to work
around. But I also had a scary experience in my personal life - actually,
for both my wife and I. We live in a relatively small town outside of
Boston. Like most small towns, we have a weekly newspaper. Usually the
first things we read in that paper (strategically placed) is the police
blotter and other "look who did what" articles. Hey, it's a small town, we
may recognize a name or two!

Okay, noone we know was in the police blotter, nor were there any problems
reported in our neighborhood other than a minor car accident. What else is
there? Oh, the outstanding town property taxes listing. My wife is
scanning through it out of curiosity. Hey!, she exclaims, here's the name
of the husband who used to own OUR house! The paper lists his address as
still being OUR address. He owes $500 and change. I get curious, and then
concerned. They don't list these tax "scoff-laws" for comic relief or to
embarrass people; these are official notices. I read the text that prefaces
the listing. The people listed owe back taxes. Okay, I figured that much
already. It then goes on to say that if these back back taxes are not paid
by the end of the month (April), all property and land associated with the
listed address will be seized by the town! What!!

Now I'm getting really p.o.'ed! That's OUR home and property! A house sale
cannot go through with any outstanding liens! My first thought is that one
half of the former owner (divorced couple) had skipped out on his share of
back taxes and was hoping his ex would get stuck, or us. Why didn't our
lawyer catch this?

To make a long story short, they were our back taxes! The former owner's
name appeared because the assessor's office hasn't switched the names over
yet in the records. However, we can't understand why we weren't notified
directly, and, how was this possible in the first place. When we set up our
mortgage, we decided to have our property taxes be included in our payments.
Instead of making two payments, one on the mortgage and quarterly tax
payments, we pay the mortgage company and they pay the tax bills. They
apparently missed a payment, or some foul-up. We're still trying to clear
it up! They admitted the error but haven't explained how. Meanwhile, the
due amount grows daily because of late fees and whatever. I'm still calling
both the mortgage company and tax office daily to keep abreast of the
situation! I hope that I hear some "good" news by the time this issue hits
the streets; or we may be hitting the streets soon! Unbelieveable! I knew
owning a home was a lot of work and headaches, but this kind of headache is

something none of us should have to endure!

So, lets get to the reason we're all here for in the first place, to hear what's going on in our small world of Atari!

Until next time...

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Atari Swap Meet 9-18-99 in Columbus, Ohio

Atari Swap/ Columbus/ 1999/ Plans Are Set

Ok, folks, here's the OFFICIAL WORD

The Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus are pleased to announce their next annual swap to be held 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. September 18, 1999, at the Oakland Park Community Center in Columbus, OHIO, USA. Sellers of any type (commercial vendor or private) may obtain tables at $5 each, and each $5 table fee will also admit one person (sorry, if no extra person in your party, the table is still $5 ... after all, folks, we're trying to keep this thing going, ya know). Otherwise, it is a $3 admission per person.

A .bmp map will be available from rwarenz@infinet.com. The location is the same that we've used for the past couple of years. [and, hint-hint, nudge, wink -- Donald Thomas: do you still have that FANTASTIC map you posted last year??? Could we prevail upon you again?]

PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD. All Atarians of all platforms and interest are invited, and we don't squawk a lot if you bring "other platforms" to swap, either. We might draw the line if you bring some pigs or stocks to sell, but we're a reasonably open bunch otherwise.

PLEASE HELP GET THE WORD OUT. Mailing costs are our prime $$ problem/limitation, and we're going to stretch it to the limit this year to try to get everyone possible to drop in. Contact any vendors you know. Encourage friends and relatives. And whoever it is, encourage them to contact us to let us know they are coming! We'd like to be as prepared as we can be. (Table reservations appreciated).

Best Regards,
Wayne

comp.sys.atari.announce Alive Again?

From: Kevin Savetz <savetz@northcoast.com>

> Just got this article in the since long dead comp.sys.atari.announce
> group. Looks like someone is able to moderate it?

Yes indeed!

After a lengthy hiatus, the newsgroup comp.sys.atari.announce is
back. I have taken over as moderator, and just approved a posting, the
group's first in years.

I plan to update the group's charter, and will work with the Atari/Usenet
community to make the newsgroup as useful as it can be. c.s.a.a will be a
low-volume newsgroup offering news about Atari software, hardware, Web
sites, and other information relevant to Atari users. Articles may be
related to Atari 8-bit, ST, Portfolio, and PC clones.

I would appreciate your help in getting the word out about
comp.sys.atari.announce -- after such a long lull, I'm sure many
Atari-loving newsgroup readers have forgotten about this newsgroup. Of
course, I also invite folks to post any Atari-related announcements to the
group.

Kevin Savetz
--
Kevin Savetz <savetz@northcoast.com>
Curator of the Digital Antic Project -- Classic Atari magazines on the Web!
        http://www.atarimagazines.com
Moderator of news:comp.sys.atari.announce

            Atari ST/TT/Falcon Disk Magazine "ST News" Web Site

From: karies@wxs.nl (Richard Karsmakers):

This message is to make you aware of the "ST News Lamentation Page", a
site where the life and times of the Atari ST/TT/Falcon multi-media
disk magazine "ST News" (1986-1996) are dwelled upon. It's located at
"http://stnews.atari.org".

The site boasts the most complete gathering of "ST News"-related
information, including an Ultimate Reference Guide, a download section
where all 42 issues of "ST News" ever unleashed on mankind can be
found, a gallery of pictures (including ones of quite a few people in
the 'Atari scene') and a link to the "ST News International Christmas
Coding Convention 2000" organisation and information site. To round it
off, the site is littered with links to over 200 sites somehow related
to "ST News" or the 'Atari Scene' in general.

The "ST News Lamentation Pages" are a huge success and have been
visited almost 14,000 times since their inception in May 1998. Come
visit to see how alive and kicking the Atari still is!

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                          PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                        compiled by Joe Mirando
                          jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It's been another hectic week (big

surprise there, huh?) and things don't look as if they'll be getting
better any time soon. I guess that's just part and parcel of modern life.

It seems that the only real enjoyment I get these days is sitting in
front of my computer and banging away at the internet or Delphi or Genie
until the strain of the day has drained away and it's time for bed.

I guess that 20 years ago I would have been out of luck as far as the
internet was concerned, and Delphi, GEnie, and CompuServe were not too
far from reality but not yet available. But at that point I didn't have
the stress that I have now... who did when they were in their late teens?
Nowadays, it seems that everyone is under more stress and looking for a
way to get rid of it. Everyone's "entitled" or "empowered" and it seems
that the only way to get ahead and stand apart is by trashing others in
one way or another.

CompuServe was my first online home which, if you read one of my recent
columns, I left recently because of their move to HMI throughout the
entire system. It really hurt me to have to do it, but I could no longer
use the service for anything other than email and as an ISP. And my
current ISP gives me great service at half the cost. So with many fond
memories, I cut the cable that had kept me 'plugged in' for all those
years. Even the Atari areas on Delphi and Genie are but shadows of their
former glory. Don't get me wrong, both are good sources but I have to
think back to when Genie was a major, major service and the Atari forum
was one of the flagships and Delphi was always a-buzz with the latest
goings-on. Yes, things have taken a downturn. But that's to be expected.
After all, Atari hasn't made a computer in years, and their strategy
while they WERE making them was usually to make the most profit with the
least actual development. Profit is profit, after all. And if you can
keep you and yours comfortable without knocking yourself out, so much the
better. It still amazes me that this type of mindset produced such great
computers and such loyal users. And for those of us still using Atari
computers, loyalty is the only word for it. There probably aren't many of
us that couldn't afford to buy an entry level PC these days, but we
choose not to either because we don't see the need, or because we
actually prefer the operating system. I happen to fall into both
categories. That's no way to feel "empowered" and "entitled" now, is it?

Where is this little missive going? I really have no idea. But by this
time, I've usually pulled some deep thought or another out of my hat and
made it all seem worthwhile... like I said before; it's been a tough
week.

If I had to put it all into a few words, I'd probably say that I still
enjoy using my Atari computers and that they still do everything I
want/need them to do. And when you come right down to it, what else is
there?

Well, let's take a look at what's going on 'round the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Lou Lew asks for help with his floppy drive:

"I've got an Atari 1040 STe, and it had been working fine, but now the
internal floppy drive is not happening. At first, I would get the "drive
not responding" warning, and then after it "warmed up", it would start to

work. Now, it still attempts, but just the warning. (BTW, I had been using high density disks on this double density drive. Was that a big mistake?)

Is the drive shot? Or is there something I can do? What should I check, clean, or tinker with?

If it is shot, does anyone know where I could get a replacement drive (cheap)?"

Steve Stupple tells Lou:

"It's nice to know that you're having the same weather as we are in SW Wales, so much for the bank holiday! Never mind there's always the other one in a few weeks time and the one after that in a month or so;)

Carefully take the cover off the disk drive and give it a go blow. While you there check that the drive heads are clean; they should look a little on the shiny side (try and catch the light at an angle), if you can see some dull patches then your heads will need cleaning.

I use some old after shave or some cheap perfume, pretty hard to find when you don't have person to go with it;), the important things is that most perfumes are alcohol based so that is evaporates.

Using a cotton wool bud, those things with cotton wall each end of a stick, apply some aftershave etc. to the bud. Don't put to much on it, you don't want it dripping:(

Carefully rub lightly over the bottom head, you should see the bud has now started to get dirty. Use the other end of the bud, the dry end, give the head alight rub.

Check to see if the head is clean and repeat if necessary.

The top head (side 2 of a disk) is a little tricky! I use the DRY end of the bud to give me an idea on if it's clean.

When you are happy the heads are clean, leave the drive for about 10 minutes to allow any wet patches to evaporate.

The perfume or aftershave etc. can cause problems and can DESTROY if dripped on electronic circuits, video/audio tapes and disks. So be very careful.

I use this method on ALL my head cleaning, and have done for many years, and have had NO problems at all.

I cannot accept any responsibility for any damage etc. incurred following these instructions. And therefore perform the procedure at your OWN risk."

John Gray tells Lou:

"My 1040STe's original Epson SMD380 drive suddenly went after about 5 years of steady use. Eventually I found a used Atari SF314 drive with a more-or-less identical drive in it (an Epson SMD390?) which I transplanted into my 1040 STe. Relatively painless, and tthe 1040 is happy. meanwhile I have these bits of an SF314 with no drive in the bay. Other than that, the experience was relatively painless."

Steve Stupple now asks:

"Is it possible to transfer files between Portfolio and Windoze 98/95 using the Smart Parallel Interface, without having to restart in DOS mode?"

Chris Crosskey tells Steve:

"No problems, run Gemulator and use the Atari software....."

Now there's a creative solution, huh? I'll bet that a normal, run-of-the-mill PC user wouldn't have thought of that.

Meanwhile Brian Lang asks for help with a bad hard drive disk:

"I have a 1.5 gig Syjet containing aif files, that I have painstakingly recorded over the past 6 months, for a Film Music CD. The cartrige is damaged, I got 2 partions out of 3 back, leaving one partition I can't access. I took it to a data recovery guy, who was very helpful. But said it would cost $6,000.00 to get the data back. Just out of my price range by about $6,000.00.

Does any one know a good HD editor or Utils that I might be able to use to get some of my songs back? Diskus looks great, but I think it's only in German."

Joe Connor tells Brian:

"I think Knife is one of the better options but it does require some knowledge of disk structure - there was a tutorial back in the mists of time.

For mere recovery of deleted files and hard disk management I like Crypton - programmed by some Swiss guys - it turned up on a Floppyshop disk at one point but the version I bought was commercial (and IIRC also German) - so not much help there - sorry!"

Steve Stupple adds his own thoughts on Knife ST:

"Knife ST is pretty restricted if the directory or fats, or any sectors around that area or contain drive info are bad:(Even bad checksums can prevent simple actions.

If anyone comes across a program that can give access to ALL hard drive data, address fields and sync data at a VERY low level, I'd be very interested in it!"

Dennis Vermeire tells Steve:

"[That program you want...] It's here among us....unfortunately it's a German program: DISKUS.

If we want a English version we'll have to ask Dr. Uwe Seimet very politely. It's not a language problem this time, cause we know his English is very good.

This bluntly refusing to release English versions it happening more and more, and the reasons the German softwarehouses give just make me ROTFL.... I know that there are a lot of Atari users in Germany, but I

can't imagine there are more of them in one country then in the rest of the world....

They don't produce English versions because they've got the impression that there's no market for it... It's up to us to prove them wrong, bombard them with eMail, asking & demanding a English version, that's the only way we've got to let them now we're out here and are interested in their products."

Rob Mahlert, author of Web Page Creator and Webmaster at atari-users.net, posts:

"I just finished uploading the first draft of a download section on www.Atari-Users.Net. Any suggestion on what files to offer for download?...

I'm talking more on the line of Internet software, STing, Newsie etc... IF... IF... the site gets used a lot more, I'm willing to transfer it to another pay hosting service with storage space. Maybe set-up our own Atari Downloads.com type site. I know of a few hosting sites that offer 250 megs of storage."

Bengy Collins, author of the terrific MagiC page at bengy.atari.org, tells Rob:

"Sounds like a nice idea to me..

250 megs is alot for atari software. Why not do something like the UTSI except with Search engines, mini reviews, and all locally hosted..

[It] would be nice."

Rob tells Bengy:

"I have considered it, it was one of my first ideas for atari-users.net's file area. But the hosting service I'm using only gives 20 megs of space, and hell it is free too! The trick is to also find a cgi script for downloading files that works with CAB 1.5.

But as you know very well... it's ALOT of work to keep a web site up and running, that is keeping it up-to date."

Jim Logan posts:

"I posted a query some time ago about very slow/stop downloads from websites via Zetnet using a Hades, STiK and HSModem. The modem should be capable of 28.8k. Since then I have upgraded to CAB 2.7 which shows the speed of download in bytes per second. Usually this shows about 400 but occasionally does up to 600. What sort of speeds do other setups achieve? I continue to think this is very slow and I am still troubled by everything coming to a full stop after a variable length of time."

Paul Williamson tells Jim:

"I don't know what you should expect with a 28.8k modem, but with my 56k I used to see download speeds mostly around 3000 - 5000 on the CAB display. I have recently upgraded to a V90 using the digital lines and see speeds significantly higher than this, 8000 - 12000 is not unusual, although at times there will always be the 400 or so speeds, presumably

because the net is busy. Watching mail downloads with Popwatch I
frequently see 9000 - 11000 or so, and Newsie's log file confirms this.
News collecting in Newsie is slower, around 3000 - 4000.

What sort of speeds do you see downloading mail ?

Like you, I use a Hades, STiK and HSModem. Would you like copies of any
of my files ?

By the way, if you use STinG, and use ATW2DT as the Modem prefix in the
DIAL.SCR it will report the connection speed in the dialer.

Do you have your Modem 2 port properly connected and configured to as
high a speed as possible for your modem, and is the Serial Port CPX flow
control set to RTS/CTS ?"

Jo Even Skarstein posts:

"I'm probably going to sell this &#/&%&#" PC and use my TT for
CD-recording instead, but before I do this (it's damn expensive!) I
wanted to hear from more experienced user how well CD-R software for TOS
performs.

I need it mainly for two things:

1) Backing up my harddisks, I really need Joliet-support for this.

2) "Backing up" Playstation-discs (don't ask).

From Soundpools web-site it doesn't look like CD Recorder Pro handles
Joliet, this is a serious drawback for such a expensive piece of
software. PSX-discs really shouldn't be a problem (even the most basic
Windows-copier copies these without problems), but I'd like to hear from
people who has actually done it before I spend DEM150 on CD Recorder Pro
and DEM700 on a CD-R..."

Ronald Hall tells Jo:

"I have CDWriter + from Anodyne Software (Roger Burrows) who also do the
ExtenDos software. I'm using it with a Yamaha CDW4416S 4 x 4 x 16 speed
CDRW. Here are some of my experiences so far...

Joliet support is provided. However, I never even tried to back up my
Minix partition because I could not get it to record correctly while
running under MiNT. I stopped as many active programs (such as CD-Player)
as I could, which is what the author recommends under multitasking
setups. CDWriter has a "simulated" mode, that does a check on whether or
not the real write will be successful or not. If its successful, the
software goes ahead and does the actual write. At 4x and 2x, it failed
under my MiNT setup. I never tried 1x, seemed pointless...

Now, under SingleTOS, with as few ACC's/Auto folder programs, etc, as
possible running, I got both 2x and 4x recording just fine. Backed up my
2 Gig HD on 2 CDR's in about 30+ minutes or so...Nice.

I'm not sure why it won't work correctly under MiNT, and until then, I
can't tell if it will back up a Minix partition or not...

Hope this helps some!

PS Oh, my brother says that you can copy the Playstation disks but that
    they won't play without a special chip or something..."

Jim Logan adds:

"You could consider CD Writer Plus and ExtendDOS Gold from Anodyne
Software. I must admit that on my Hades I have not been able to get this
combination to backup my hard-drive but I understand they do work on
other Atari machines.

ExtenDOS Gold is said to handle ISO9660 extensions including the Joliet
filesystem. (I am simply quoting from the manual. I have no idea what
this means.)"

Dennis Vermeire adds this interesting bit of information:

"There seem to be a few misconceptions here about what exactly one can
do with CD Recorder Pro.

SoundPool CD Recorder Pro supports the CD formats CD ROM, Audio CD,
Mixed Mode CD and CD extra. Generic formats, such as HFS, PSX, UNIX and
various sampler formats, can be copied with the SCSI copy function.

I'll try to explain what the Generic Format do, because there is a lot
of confusion about this:

From SCSI hard disk drives and CD ROM drives in ANY format one can burn
a CD. After scanning the SCSI bus, all connected SCSI devices are
displayed. The drive which has to be copied is selected and one can burn
a straight one to one copy to CD from it. What this means in practice is
that one can burn a CD from a partition which is NOT accessable by TOS.
Mac HFS, UNIX or some special formats used by samplers can all be
transferred to CD. The produced CD can NOT be read by TOS, when copying a
MAC HFS partition you end up with a MAC HFS CD. So the Generic Format is
OK for backup from ALL none TOS partitions and also to copy CDs like the
Playstation PSX format.

There are a couple of drawbacks: the SCSI Copy function only works like
its name suggests with SCSI devices, so IDE drives & partitions are not
recognised. The maximum capacity is 650MB, so if one has a partition
which is bigger, say 800MB, only the first 650MB are copied.

So far so good...
When one wants to create a CD from scratch, this is handled by the the
file formatter. The file formatter can NOT handle long file names, these
will be truncated and burned like this to the CD. This is a real pain,
when working with MagiC or MiNT one starts to use the long file name
options rather quickly. The ISO formatter can handle the 9960 level 1
standard, the Atari format, DOS format and a special format which is
called: "don't care". With this last option the CD wil be written as the
data is. It is not gueranteed however that this CD will work on every OS

Backups
Normally one uses the multi session format to backup data on CD ROM. The
program supports the archive bit management function. With the "use
archive bit" and "clear archive bit" functions the software will only
save edited files to the CD. So, when one makes a backup from his data,
the next time ONLY data that is new or changed will be written to the CD.
This saves a lot of space and time.

Burning
Before burning a CD, one can test if the CD will be burned succesfully
at the choosen speed. This is a question of knowing your system.... When
burning a CD containing 30000 files (fonts, small gifs, HTML pages) the
harddisk can't keep up, and 1X is the maximum speed on a TT. When
burning a CD containing big files (>1MB) 4X can be sustained easily...
If you have enough harddisk space the best system is to make an image,
this will take some time (15' max.) but then you can always burn at 4X
and the time lost making the image is gained back quickly. You also never
have to waist time with the "test" option, because an image will always
be written succesfully at maximum speed.

Audio files can be written straight to the CD at 4X without the need to
make an image, so copying a Music CD goes very fast. With certain writers
4X can not be handled on a Falcon, but on a TT there are no problems.

I'm not gonna explain the Audio CD functions here, for the time just be
happy with the fact that it is one of very few programs on any platform
which can prepare a CD ready to be pressed by an Recording Studio. Not
suprising really, because the roots from SoundPool is the music business
after all.

Comparing CD Recorder Pro with CD Writer is unfair... CD Writer makes
backups from partitions which can then be viewed in TOS. So Minix, HFS,
UNIX etc are out of the question. It is capable of making a backup from
a accessable partition containing long file names. Accessable partitions
is the magic word here... Compared to CD Recorder Pro, CD Writer Gold is
very limited and offers only the pure basics. Considering that CD
Recorder Pro has come down in price, the choice should be easy....

CD Recorder Pro works with Falcon and TT, with a Link '97 connected ST &
STE can also work with the program. For some strange reason the program
does NOT work on a Milan (SCSI card ?), I don't know about the Hades..."

Henrik Johannisson posts:

"I've recently tried to send files between the Atari and PC using Z-modem
protocol (and others also) but I haven't had any success.

On Atari I use FreezeDried Terminal and on the PC I use Telix or that
Hyperterminal which is included in Win95. I use a normal null-modem-cable
and nothing works. When I try to do such simple things as sending one
character at a time or a simple text-file I get, in best case, a totally
messed up result. Often nothing happends at all. The serial circuits
seems to be okay since they are able to send and receive but you'll never
know. Yes, I have the same setup on both machines.. Tried all speeds,
all sort of setups from 5E1 to 8N1 but nothing works. Nothing...

Has anyone else managed to get any descent contact betwenn Hyperterminal
and FreezeDried ?"

Mike Harvey tells Henrik:

"Haven't tried it with Hypertermainal, but used Procomm for Windows and
Flash 1.6 and got it to work before, you might need one of the bug fixes
that locks the RTS/CTS Signal so your running a high speed. Used it to
move alot of my Atari data to my PC, sort it out and burn into a backup
CDR of my Atari files. Much safer than contining to loose my Atari files
I've been colecting for about 10 years now.

So, might be a bug fix for RTS/CTS which applies to your version of TOS.
Let us know which version of TOS, etc your using and perhaps we can help
more."

Well folks, this column has gotten much longer than I had anticipated.
It's time to say good night and have a good week 'till we meet here
again. Until then, keep your ears open and be sure to listen to what
they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section   - EGM & PSX Mag Review Star Wars 1st!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Namco Licenses 11 Titles to Hasbro!
                                     "Major League Baseball 2000"!
                                     U.S. Dreamcast Release Set!
                                     And much, much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, it's mid-April. The "furor" and laughter from our recent April Fools
story has died out, as expected. I hope that the event re-kindled some
Jaguar enthusiasts to continue their attempts to convince Hasbro to provide
some support for the remaining games to be produced. Unfortunately, it
seems like a crapshoot at the moment. Hopefully, we'll be able to provide
some positive news regarding this situation in the near future.

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                   Sega Set to Launch New Dreamcast in U.S.

Sega Enterprises Ltd. will release Dreamcast, its next-generation
video-game system, in September, hoping to gain a competitive advantage
against rivals Sony and Nintendo for the crucial holiday shopping season.

Sega is expected to announce Thursday it will launch a $100 million
marketing campaign to support the U.S. rollout of Dreamcast, which will
retail for $199.

Dreamcast has already sold more than 1 million units in Japan since its launch last November.

Sega will be the first manufacturer to release the next generation of gaming system in the United States, giving it an edge over rivals Sony and Nintendo -- which it has lagged behind in recent years.

Sony currently accounts for about 60 percent of the U.S. market for video game machines with its PlayStation system, while Nintendo holds more than 30 percent; Sega has less than 5 percent, analysts said.

Sega hasn't launched a new system in the United States in five years, when it unveiled the Saturn gaming console. Its rivals have a wider selection of games and Nintendo's 64-bit system is twice as powerful as the Saturn.

"This is their opportunity to bring back their following," said Anthony Gikas, vice president at US Bancorp Piper Jaffray in Minneapolis. "With this rollout, they are ahead of the cycle and they need that."

Dreamcast is the first home-gaming system to include Internet capabilities. With a modem installed in its base, consumers will be able to play games online, as well as e-mail, chat and browse the Web.

The Tokyo-based Sega plans to detail its Internet strategy next month at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles.

Dreamcast will also feature advanced 3-D graphics and sound devices. The 128-bit system will have double the capability of the Nintendo 64 and four times the power of the Sony PlayStation.

There will be 10 to 12 games available for the Dreamcast in September, and by Christmas, the company expects about 30 to be on the market.

Microsoft collaborated with Sega on the Dreamcast, the first time the Redmond, Wash.-based software giant has ventured into the home console video games.

Analysts say that the $199 launch price puts Sega in a solid position to become a strong seller during the Christmas season. Never before has a new next generation console come to market for less than $200.

The company has received more than 30,000 pre-orders for the new Dreamcast already, and expects that to soar above 200,000 by the launch date.

"While they haven't dominated in the U.S. in recent years, they still have a good name and they have a great advantage with being the first to market a machine with Internet capability," said Kelly Henry, an analyst with International Data Corp. in Framingham, Mass.

Sega's launch of Dreamcast will come at least a year before Sony brings its newest gaming system to the United States. The 128-bit machine, now known as the PlayStation II, should be in stores in Japan next winter and in the U.S. market by the fall of 2000.

Nintendo has not yet released its plans for a new system, but analysts said the platform should be available in 2001.

AMD PGL Names Finalists, Location, Dates for Spring '99 Championships

Live Finals Event in New York City May 21 - 22
Will Award $100,000 to Top Computer Gamers

The AMD Professional Gamers' League (PGL) today announced that the live
championships of its Spring '99 season will be held at XS New York, a
popular interactive gaming arena in Manhattan's Times Square, May 21 - 22.
The two-day event will feature the top 16 players in two game categories,
with more than $100,000 in cash and prizes being awarded. The first pro
sports league for computer game enthusiasts, the PGL has attracted more
than $3 million in sponsor funding, and has given more than $250,000 in
cash and prizes to the top players in its three previous seasons. More
than 4,000 spectators are expected to attend the live competition, with an
estimated 50,000 following the action via live Webcast. Admission to the
event is free, and hundreds of ''door prizes," ranging from PGL player
trading cards to software and hardware, will be given out to fans.

''We're thrilled to be holding the PGL Spring '99 finals in New York City,
and expect a huge turnout for the event, since New York and the outlying
areas are a hotbed of computer gaming activity," said Lesley Mansford,
vice president of marketing for the PGL. ''Furthermore, we're looking
forward to the exposure that holding the event in Manhattan will afford us,
not only in terms of gaming fans, but also the huge advertising and media
communities based there that may not have seen PGL championship action in
person before."

Featuring id Software's Quaker II and Blizzard Entertainment's
Starcraft, each in head-to-head (1-on-1) format, the Spring '99 Season
is delivering greater rewards to a larger number of players than ever
before. $60,000 in cash and $40,000 in prizes are being awarded to the top
players this season, with prizes ranging from $100 for the 32nd-place
finisher to $10,000 in cash and nearly $4,000 in prizes for the champion in
each category.

The Spring '99 PGL finalists, with their city of residence:

    Quake II
    Alex "bad-habit" Pogozelski: McLean, VA
    Eric "DH-SaboTaJ" Manfredi: Mundelein, IL
    Kurt "Immortal" Shimada: Pleasanton, CA
    Jason "Jmaster" Siquig: Fremont, CA
    Gordon "K9-Gloucester" Luk: Los Angeles, CA
    Bon "Kuin" Danan: Montreal, Canada
    Sebastian "Sybek" Lenart: Mississauga, Ont., Canada
    Erik "Vorador" Spoor: Amsterdam, NY

    Starcraft
    Dave "BOO!" Howell: Gander, Newfoundland
    David "DeepBlue" Magro: Rochester, NY
    Guillaume "Grrrr" Patry: Beauport, Quebec
    Patrick "Kain-the-Feared" Chapelsky: Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada
    Christopher "Pillars" Page: Andover, MA
    Wayne "Soso" Chiang: San Jose, CA
    Stephen "taurus49" Chan: Culver City, CA
    Dennis "~WarAngel~;." Lee: Grand Prairie, TX

While many of the 16 remaining players are thrilled just to be finalists,

at least one top gamer won't be satisfied with anything less than winning it all. ''I've gotten a taste of PGL success, and this season I'm set on taking home the first-place prize and all the fame and fortune that goes with it," said Kurt ''Immortal" Shimada, a 15-year old high school sophomore from Pleasanton, California who finished second in the PGL's last Quake II championships, taking home almost $8,000 in cash and prizes. ''I believe I'm the best Quake II player this season, now I've gotta make believers out of everybody else!"

In addition to 16 of the best computer game players in North America, PGL commissioner Nolan Bushnell is expected to attend the event. Bushnell, the founder of Atari Corp. and creator of the first commercial videogame, PONG, will help oversee the proceedings, as well as being available for media interviews.

A live Webcast of the two-day event will enable fans to follow all the PGL championship action from the comfort of their own desktop. Including pre- and post-game interviews and analysis, live gameplay footage, and color and play-by-play commentary, the Webcast will be accessible via the PGL web site (www.pgl.com).

 Chicago-based Video Game Magazines Feature First Look at 'Phantom Menace'

For the first time ever, The Ziff-Davis Video Gaming Group, based here, has tapped into the all-powerful Force of the Star Wars universe to bring enthusiasts coverage unlike anything ever seen before in interactive entertainment. Electronic Gaming Monthly (http://www.videogames.com) and the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine will be the first gaming magazines in the world to feature coverage of the Star Wars: Episode I -- Phantom Menace video and computer games.

Once readers turn past the spectacular, exclusive covers, they will find news, previews, interviews, screenshots, artwork and other top-secret info on the upcoming releases of RACER and STAR WARS: EPISODE I -- THE PHANTOM MENACE. ZD's editors have gone behind the scenes at the bustling LucasArts facility in San Raphael, Calif., to dig up the best stuff on the most eagerly awaited entertainment event of 1999.

"We're thrilled to be the first ones to be working with LucasArts on this project," said John Davison, Editor-in-Chief of Electronic Gaming Monthly, himself a huge Star Wars fanatic. "The Star Wars games are guaranteed to be some of the biggest games titles this year. If the interest in the movie is anything to go by, I think the games will attract an audience outside of the usual video games consumer." Electronic Gaming Monthly, incidentally, features a 16-page first look at two Episode I games, more coverage than any other magazine in the world.

"I don't get it," mused Kraig Kujawa, Editor-in-Chief of the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine. "Why do two of the biggest things that have happened to the PlayStation -- the official announcement of the next PlayStation and the Star Wars: Episode I games -- have to fall on the same darned issue?" It was a tough call, but Kujawa put The Phantom Menace on the cover.

"The two Episode I trailers have already captured the imaginations of Star Wars fans everywhere, and ZD's pubs will only build on that fanatical interest by delivering the most in depth info on the Phantom Menace games," said Joe Funk, Editorial Director of the Ziff-Davis Video Game Group. "Put

simply, Star Wars fans everywhere will want to check out these magazines."

                 Hasbro Interactive Acquires Rights to 11 Namco Titles

Leading entertainment software publisher Hasbro Interactive today announced
it has reached an agreement with Namco Ltd. that will allow Hasbro
Interactive to develop, publish and distribute interactive games based on
11 Namco properties, including Pac-Man, the #1 video arcade game of all
time. The license agreement includes PC game rights to such arcade classics
as Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man and Dig Dug, and multiple hardware platform rights
to Galagar, Galaxian and Pole Position, among others.

''We expect the Namco properties to greatly enhance our position in the
action games category," explained Hasbro Interactive President Tom
Dusenberry. ''Our success with Froggerr on both the PC and PlayStation
game console has paved the way for future development in this genre of
games. The Namco properties are an excellent fit with Hasbro Interactive's
classic games heritage."

Hasbro Interactive's first games based on the Namco properties will be
available in the fall of 2000, coinciding with Pac-Man's 20th anniversary.
Over the years, there have been more than 430 licensed Pac-Man products,
making it among the most popular franchises in the entertainment industry.
Hasbro's Milton Bradley division developed board games, puzzles and card
games featuring the familiar yellow character.

''Hasbro Interactive's success in bringing classic arcade games to the
mass-market made them the right partner for us in this venture," said
Namco Managing Director Yasuhiko Asada. Namco will introduce the first 3D
Pac-Man game this fall, Pac-Man World 20th Anniversary for the PlayStation
game console. ''There is a huge market for retro entertainment. We're
putting a major emphasis on Pac-Man around our launch of Pac-Man World 20th
Anniversary this fall and Hasbro Interactive will help us carry the
momentum well into 2000 and beyond with new versions for the PC."

''This is a great opportunity for both Hasbro Interactive and Namco," said
Mike Fischer, Director of Marketing, Namco Hometek Inc. ''I'm especially
excited about Hasbro Interactive's PC-based products for Pac-Man and Ms.
Pac-Man, which will support the impact and awareness of Namco's own
PlayStation products. Pac-Man World 20th Anniversary will just be the start
of a great new family of updated Namco classics from both of our
companies."

Arcade game fans have scooped up more than 2 million copies of Hasbro
Interactive's Frogger since it was introduced in 1997. Last month, the
two-year-old title hopped its way to #2 on the PC games sales chart,
according to PC Data. ''Character-driven classics like Frogger can have an
extremely long shelf-life," explained Dusenberry. ''We see enormous
potential with the many Namco properties, not the least of which is
Pac-Man. Hasbro Interactive will bring these classic gaming properties into
the next millennium in a big way."

Hasbro Interactive will debut a full line of action games at the Electronic
Entertainment Expo in May. Among the planned fall releases are all-new, 3D
versions of Pong, Tetris and Missile Command. And, just in time for summer,
Hasbro Interactive will release a compilation CD-ROM of original Atari
games.

Major League Baseball Teams Compete In MLB 2000

989 Sports announced Opening Day of the MLB 2000 "Locker Room
Challenge." Players throughout MLB will be competing against each other
with 989 Sports' MLB 2000 -- the most authentic baseball videogame on the
PlayStation game console.

Teammate rivalry will consist of 16 players from each team competing on MLB
2000. Bracketed tournament play will take place throughout the season in
each team's clubhouse, resulting in one videogame champion per team. All
finalists will receive a copy of MLB 2000 and, more importantly, bragging
rights as their team's MLB 2000 videogame champion.

"We recently demonstrated MLB 2000 for teams at Spring Training camps and
truly the players didn't want to stop playing the game," said Jeffrey Fox,
vice president, marketing, 989 Studios. "We've been told that MLB 2000 is
the baseball videogame the pros play because of its realistic graphics and
authentic gameplay. For us, that is a tremendous vote of confidence."

MLB 2000 includes every team, all the players and outstanding commentary
with Hall of Fame announcer Vin Scully and ESPN analyst Dave Campbell. All
the stadiums are designed to perfection and every player is presented in
unbelievable detail. Even the actual stances and deliveries for more than
200 MLB batters and pitchers have been personalized. MLB 2000 has a
reputation for being the most realistic, partly due to the involvement of
All-Star players such as Mo Vaughn, Shawn Estes, Darryl Hamilton and Brett
Tomko (just to name a few).

Navy To Use Game To Train Pilots

A flight student who had never flown a plane learned so much from a common
computer game that the Navy plans to save money by using the software to
train other fledgling pilots.

Ensign Herb Lacy, 24, bought Microsoft's Flight Simulator while he was in
preflight training at Pensacola Naval Air Station. The combat version of
the game sells for around $50.

He customized the program to mimic the look and controls of a T-34C Turbo
Mentor, which the Navy uses for primary flight training. The student from
Bowie, Md., logged 50 hours of flight time on his personal computer before
ever climbing into a real T-34C.

Now he is one of the top students in his class at Corpus Christi Naval Air
Station, Texas, Navy officials told the Pensacola News Journal.

Lacy also made about 20 copies of his customized program for fellow flight
students.

``I can't think of a single person who has tried it and had anything
negative to say," Lacy said.

Next month, the Navy will begin operating six makeshift T-34C simulators

running on Flight Simulator at Corpus Christi, the newspaper reported
Monday. Each one, consisting of a box made to resemble a cockpit, aircraft
controls, a personal computer and a 21-inch monitor, will cost $6,000
compared to millions for conventional simulators.

''I'm just flabbergasted," said Rear Adm. Mike Bucchi, chief of the Naval
Air Training Command at Corpus Christi.

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           CLASSIC GAMING EXPO '99(tm) ANNOUNCES DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

                 AUGUST SHOW FAST BECOMING INDUSTRY PHENOMENON

April 15, 1999

VALLEY STREAM, NY -- Hot on the heals of an announcement by Hasbro
Interactive to publish eleven Namco blockbuster classic video games
including "Pac-Man" and "Galaga", the Classic Gaming Expo '99(tm)
(CGE'99) promoters released a partial list of celebrities scheduled to
attend the August event. In all, over thirty video game and computer
pioneers have confirmed plans to actively participate, including
industry legends such as Mr. Nolan Bushnell, founder of Atari, and
Mr. Ralph Baer, father of the Magnavox Odyssey.

Among the many industry dignitaries that have confirmed their plans
to attend are:

-- Mr. Steve Cartwright, Activision designer of such classic hits as
"Megamania" and "Barnstorming" for the Atari VCS.

-- Mr. David Crane, Atari programmer and Activision co-founder.
Designer of numerous Atari VCS classics including "Outlaw", "Slot
Machine", "Freeway", and the mega-hit "Pitfall!".

-- Mr. Rob Fulop, Atari programmer and Imagic co-founder. Designed
the Atari VCS versions of "Night Driver" and "Missile Command", as well
as "Demon Attack". Also responsible for the highly-controversial Sega CD
title, "Night Trap".

-- Mr. Arnie Katz, Mr. Bill Kunkel, and Ms. Joyce Worley. The pioneers
of videogame magazine publishing. This elite media trio was responsible
for co-founding Electronic Games Magazine and several others throughout
the years.

-- Mr. Ed Logg, the creator of numerous arcade mega-hits including
"Asteroids", "Centipede", "Millipede", "Gauntlet", and "Xybots".

-- Mr. Jay Smith, mastermind responsible for bringing us the Vectrex,
the first and only vector home game system.

Up-to-the minute details and an expanded guest list, as well as discount
ticket and travel information may be found at the official Classic Gaming
Expo '99 (tm) Web Site at http://www.cgexpo.com.

The Classic Gaming Expo will take place at the beautiful Plaza Hotel
on Saturday, August 14 and Sunday, August 15 in the heart of Las Vegas.
The Expo includes back-to-back keynote presentations, an elaborate museum
containing many rare and unreleased software and hardware products,
demonstrations of forthcoming classic products from Hasbro, The Blue
Sky Rangers, and Nyko Technologies as well as a spectacular opportunity
to buy and trade classic video game systems and software.

Conceived and coordinated by two of the individuals responsible for
coordinating last year's highly successful "World of Atari" event,
Classic Gaming Expo(tm) is the industry's only annual event that is
dedicated to celebrating the roots of electronic entertainment,
bringing together industry pioneers, gaming enthusiasts and the media
for the ultimate in learning, game-playing and networking. Classic
Gaming Expo(tm) is a production of CGE Services, Corp.
(www.cgexpo.com)

Media assistance provided by http://www.icwhen.com

               New Episode of Back In Time -- Hasbro Interactive

Posted by MPS (mstulirr.ne.mediaone.net) on April 10, 1999

What have been the two hottest topics within the Atari community over the
last 8-12 months?

When will Hasbro Interactive encrypt BattleSphere?

When will Hasbro Interactive talk to us?

The latest episode of Back In Time has been posted, and my guest is Dana
Henry, Director of Public Relations for Hasbro Interactive. Dana and I
recently conducted an hour-long interview, which you will hear in its
entirety. That interview covered a number of subjects, with particular
focus on their recent acquisition of the Atari properties, and their future
plans for those classic Atari games. We also cover their stance on the
classic arcade gamers, arcade emulation, the IDSA, etc.

Yes, Dana does address the BattleSphere situation.

Dana made three product announcements during this interview. Two of the
three new products had not been publicly announced before, and Back In Time
has the EXCLUSIVE news that you won' hear anywhere else. One of those
announcements is for an emulation-related product to be released this

summer!!! The other announcement; well, you will just have to hear it for
yourself. It surprised me.

This is an episode not to miss. If you are a classic Atari gamer, or a fan
of classic game emulation, visit the Back In Time web site and listen to
the latest episode.

Back In Time is a web site dedicated to classic gaming and computing. The
web site covers many subjects pertaining to classic video games, with an
emphasis on the classic Atari arcade video games, home console video games,
and computers.

The Back In Time radio program is a bi-weekly Internet streaming webcast
with interviews and information pertaining to all aspects of the classic
gaming and computing community.

In order to listen to the show, you will need a PC or a Mac with the Real
Audio player, which is a FREE download from http://www.real.com

The Back In Time web site is located at

http://www.emuclassics.com/backintime

New Heath High School Suit Filed

Video game manufacturers, pornographic web sites and a movie production
company are all named in a multi-Million dollar lawsuit... filed today in
connection with the Heath High School shootings.

Lawyer Jack Thompson says the families of the three girls slain during
Michael Carneal's shooting rampage believe companies like Atari, Sega,
Nintendo, Sony... the producers of the movie ``Basketball Diaries''... and
several Internet companies helped incite Carneal's shooting spree. The
families are seeking 130 million dollars for their loss.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Computer Virus Sleuths Hunt Crime

The rules of war say know your enemy - valuable advice, unless your enemies
are the misfits who create computer viruses.

Members of the team that battled Melissa - among scores of other computer
viruses over the years - say they have little interest in the people who
tweak or cripple computers.

''We don't get down to the 'who.' We're technology-based. We want to know how these things happened and how they can be fixed," said Tom Longstaff, who supervises the Computer Emergency Response Team.

The 12-member team, which works at the Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, was formed in 1988 in response to the Morris Worm - a virus that disabled part of the predecessor to the Internet. Since then, the team has addressed 14,000 security breaches.

''They are the ones I trust," said Peter Shankman, an Internet site designer in New York and former America Online news site manager.

He said it would be much tougher to get accurate information on the gossipy Internet without the ''calming voice" of CERT. The software institute, which started in 1984, gets $26 million a year from the Defense Department and another $12 million from private sources.

In exposing Melissa, CERT caught a break by learning about it on the afternoon of March 26 - a Friday. That gave analysts extra time with the program before a weekday and potential chaos from the virus.

''We analyze it as a piece of software. We're not out there chasing down the bad guys," said CERT member Shawn Hernan, who spent that Friday night with Melissa.

CERT put the word out Saturday morning through an advisory on its Internet site, www.cert.org. At the time, CERT said it was only the second time it has considered a virus important enough to warrant a public announcement. The first, in 1994, warned of a virus that allowed computer burglars to collect passwords.

By Monday, Melissa's reputation was well-known, allowing computer managers to create protections before workers showed up and checked e-mail.

Even so, the virus is known to have affected 300 organizations and 100,000 people and probably hit more, according to CERT. Its effectiveness was aided by the element of trust - the virus was disguised as an ''important message" from a friend or colleague. It caused computers to fire off 50 infected messages, slowing or disabling e-mail systems.

One advertising agency reported e-mails going out at a rate of 711 per minute before its computers crashed, CERT's Jeff Carpenter said.

Melissa's alleged creator, New Jersey computer consultant David L. Smith, appeared in court Thursday to be advised of state charges against him. Federal investigators are also studying the case.

CERT, meanwhile, readied itself for variations expected to appear during the next few months.

Even without Melissa offshoots, the team likely will remain busy since, according to Longstaff, about one-quarter of Internet users have less than one year's computer experience. And that makes for a lot of unwary victims.

''In the beginning, everyone on the Internet was an expert and could pretty much get a handle on a problem," Longstaff said. ''But now we are dealing with helpless victims, and the experts are few and far between."

Gates Says Settlement Must Preserve Windows Integrity

Microsoft Corp. Chief Bill Gates said the integrity of Microsoft's Windows operating system and the freedom to innovate are two key principles that must guide any settlement in the U.S. Justice Department's antitrust lawsuit against the software behemoth.

Gates, speaking at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said, ``We think supporting the Internet, Windows is a very, very good thing, and we think the fact of having the integrity of Windows as a complete product is a very good thing."

Gates spoke at a press conference following his presentation of a $20 million gift to MIT toward a new building for the university's Laboratory for Computer Science.

``We just want to have the freedom to innovate, and continue to have a product of great integrity, and that's all we've really stated as key principles," Gates said when asked of progress toward a settlement.

Gates, who declined to elaborate further on the Redmond, Wash.,-based firm's much-publicized antitrust battle, also predicted that in five years businesses will use the Internet more than they use telephones.

Asked when online usage will become ubiquitous beyond its present 29 percent rate in the United States, Gates responded, "Billions of dollars of market valuation are based on knowing how quickly this will happen."

IBM Releases Java Software For Windows

International Business Machines Corp. said Monday it was making available free software that will help write applications in Sun Microsystems Inc.'s Java programming language that run on Windows.

The software, one of many so-called Java Virtual Machines, lies between a computer operating system and applications written in Java. Java lets programmers write an application once that will run on many different computing environments.

IBM said its Java Virtual Machine for Microsoft Corp.'s Windows is on average 30 percent faster than other virtual machine software written for Windows/Intel-based computers, including Microsoft's version. IBM said it is also fully compatible with Sun's Java software and its requirements.

In October 1997, Sun sued Microsoft in U.S. District Court over its licensing agreement with Microsoft, alleging that Microsoft did not develop versions of its software and tool kits for Java that were compliant with Sun's specifications.

Microsoft is now under court order to make those products fully compliant with Sun's Java. While Microsoft is complying with the court order, it is also appealing the ruling.

``It doesn't appear that they want to support the Java independent software developers out there," said Rod Smith, chief technology officer of Java at IBM. ``They are not investing in the technology to stay with the industry's

direction...It is important for many of our customers to have a compliant and fast JVM to run on Windows."

IBM said its software, in some cases, is as much as 52 percent faster than other Windows versions. The computer group said its software will be available beginning Monday for free over the Internet at www.ibm.com/java/.

``It's an alternative to Sun's and Microsoft's Java implementation for Windows," said Tom Neffenger, chief technology officer of Volano, a San Francisco-based start-up that develops chat server software. ``IBM did something that much better."

Net Name Monopoly Starts Crumbling Soon

Ever since 1993, when the federal government decided it wanted to get out of the business of registering the names of new Internet sites, there has been just one place to go to get your own ``.com" address.

But starting at the end of April, the government's exclusive registrar -- Network Solutions Inc. -- will face competition for the first time.

Instead of going to the Web site of Herndon, Va.-based Network Solutions at http://www.networksolutions.com to register a new Internet address ending with .com, .org or .net, Web surfers will have five alternatives to choose from.

Just who the five will be is to remain a mystery until the government's hand-picked overseer, the non-profit Internet Corp. for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN, announces its selections on April 21.

The five, to be followed in a few months by many more, will be the guinea pigs for new software that is supposed to allow Network Solutions to remain the sole holder of the vast database of Internet addresses while allowing multiple companies to act as registrars, adding new addresses from customers around the globe.

ICANN has not said how many applications it received for the first five slots, or who any of the applicants might be. The names of major telephone companies and Internet service providers like Sprint Corp. and America Online have been rumored as possible selections, along with a host of much smaller start-ups.

No matter who the first five are, competition will almost surely lower the price of registering a domain name.

Network Solutions charges $70 for an initial two-year period with annual updates priced at $35.

One of the most critical issues yet to be decided between the U.S. government, ICANN and Network Solutions is the price competing registrars will pay to cover Network Solutions' costs of maintaining the database.

Under the system worked out by ICANN, Network Solutions will continue to manage the vast database, which holds more than 4 million addresses already. That should keep the Net's critical address system routing everything from e-mail to Web page requests running without a hiccup.

Competing registrars will be allowed to make their own entries into the database, paying Network Solutions a small fee each time.

If the fee is set at $25 or $30 per year, new companies will have little room to offer registrations below the current rate and still eke out a profit. But if the so-called wholesale price is set at $2 to $5, expect to see super-cheap .com addresses proliferate quickly.

Analysts and onlookers predict something closer to the low end.

William Whyman, Internet analyst at the Legg Mason Precursor Group, said the fee is likely to be less than $15 and more than $2,

``They want a competitive market, but they don't want to push Network Solutions out of business," he said.

Aside from the denizens of cyberspace seeking to register new Web sites, the competitive system could also have a major impact on investors holding stock in high-flying Network Solutions.

The company's shares closed Friday on the Nasdaq at $108, more than five times higher than a year ago but well off an all-time high of $153 reached a few weeks ago.

Short sellers, who sell borrowed stock they hope to replace in the future with lower priced shares, have targeted the company as due for a fall. But several Wall Street firms are predicting the company's shares will continue to rocket ahead.

In a separate move Friday, the company made a small concession to government officials and proponents of competition.

The company had drawn fire last month when it eliminated a Web site called Internic.net that provided information about already registered Web site addresses. The company redirected all traffic from that address to its own.

The site was managed by Network Solutions, but government officials said they were to be consulted before any changes could be made.

The revised Internic site did not have the registration search and information functions restored but offered links to Network Solutions, ICANN and a government site.

Lycos Debuts Personalized Portal Service

Internet media firm Lycos Inc. Wednesday unveiled a plan to let users personalize their Web sites with services like news, weather and stock quotes.

The personalization service, known as My Lycos, is similar to customization schemes introduced by Internet media firms like Yahoo Inc. Personalization is geared to attract more users to a site and keep them there for longer periods of time.

My Lycos allows users on the Lycos network to read e-mail, update their home page, search, shop, or chat from the same place.

The Waltham, Mass. firm said My Lycos adds to and consolidates
personalization services already on its network.

Altavista Give Advertisers Top Slot

In a first among the major Internet search engines, AltaVista.com will
begin offering advertisers the opportunity to have their Web sites listed
at the top of search results, causing concern that a valuable tool to sift
through the Web could be compromised by commercial pressures.

The paid links will appear when an AltaVista user searches for information
using any of about 500 initial keywords - including ''computer." The
bracketed notices will be marked as paid for by advertisers, although it's
unclear how prominent the disclosure will be. The program is expected to
begin Monday.

''The onus is on us to ensure the paid placements are relevant," said Rod
Schrock, president and CEO of AltaVista.com. ''But I believe we're making
our search results page more relevant."

Search engines are some of the most popular sites on the Web, and they are
often the starting point for researching purchases such as a house, a car
or a computer.

Still, profit margins online are slim to nonexistent, and companies looking
to justify soaring stock prices are inventing new revenue streams that some
might say compromises objective information.

Rivals such as Excite or Lycos use software to prowl the Web and gather
keywords based on what appears in the Web pages. When a user searches for
''Maria Callas" the opera singer, for example, the software returns the
Web pages that it computes to most closely match a user's request, in the
order of most closely matched.

AltaVista, by contrast, now might display merchants selling compact discs
of Callas at the top of the list - useful if a user wants to buy a CD, but
not so useful for student writing a report.

Payment for search placement is not unheard of. Lesser-known GoTo.com,
based in Pasadena, Calif., also offers a similar option, though AltaVista
is the first major service to do so.

''The idea of a search engine is to find information on a chaotic web,"
said Gary Ruskin, director of Commercial Alert, a consumer advocacy group
in Washington, D.C. ''If the top slots are for sale as opposed to what the
information really is, people will go elsewhere."

Amazon.com felt that sting in February, when it admitted it had sold
positive book reviews with prominent placement to publishers. The company
offered refunds and began marking paid reviews as such when customers
complained.

AltaVista is no doubt feeling similar pressure to deliver, as parent
company Compaq Computer Corp. moves forward with plans to spin off the
search engine in an initial public offering sometime this year.

The new revenue ''will be not insignificant," said Schrock. ''If executed

well, it could be a good contributor of revenue."

DoubleClick Inc., which sells advertising for AltaVista, promoted the program in a recent e-mail message to potential customers.

``When users perform keyword searches on AltaVista, what is the first listing they see?" the message said. ``Now it can be your company's listing."

For this to work, the search engine must ensure it matches paid keywords and links with relevant merchants, said Marissa Gluck, an analyst at Jupiter Communications, a research firm in New York.

``They shouldn't be selling the word 'football' to Ford just because Ford is trying to target a certain demographic," she said.

And consumers should be clearly informed that the listing is paid for.

``If it is done wisely, it could benefit the consumer," she said. ``But you have to let the consumer know that that is real estate that has been sold."

But even that won't be enough for some.

``It's part of a greater theme of how commercialism destroys the integrity of everything it touches," said Ruskin. ``That's today's example. There will be another one tomorrow."

AOL Volunteers Claim Exploitation

They patrol the Internet like old-fashioned neighborhood watchmen, keeping the peace and helping lost souls.

But now a handful of former America Online volunteer ``community leaders" are challenging the company, saying they should be paid for their work.

``You do not treat volunteers like this. You treat them with respect," said Kelly Hallissey, one of seven who have complained to the U.S. Department of Labor, which is looking into the matter.

Their numbers are tiny, yet a successful challenge could shake the Internet world, forcing Web companies that rely heavily on such volunteers to begin paying for their services. For instance, AOL, which employs 12,000 workers, uses 10,000 volunteers to lead chat rooms, report violations of Internet rules and answer questions from puzzled surfers.

``This is a significant issue," New York-based employment lawyer Eve Rachel Markewich said in an interview Wednesday. ``Whatever determination is made with AOL is going to have an impact on how these companies run their business in the future, and whether or not they continue to employ these volunteers."

The participation of volunteers - from tech-smitten teen-agers to Nobel Prize laureates - has been integral to the phenomenal growth of the Web. A notable example is the computer operating system software called Linux that is now posing a threat to the dominance of Microsoft's Windows. Linux grew out of the tinkerings of scientists and amateurs worldwide.

AOL and many other Internet companies have gone a step further, enlisting volunteers in a structured fashion to help control the traffic that can verge on chaos in the virtual world. The question raised now is whether such companies are riding to profitability on the backs of unpaid workers.

AOL defends the system, saying it's part of the culture of the Web.

''This whole volunteerism community and the participants are what makes the Internet," said AOL spokeswoman Ann Brackbill.

In exchange for their services, AOL community leaders get a free account, which costs $21.95 a month. During the years that AOL charged hourly rates, volunteers potentially were even better compensated.

Ms. Brackbill refused to give details, but said the company contacted the Department of Labor after it found out about Observers.net, a Web site started in September by the volunteers with grievances.

A Department of Labor spokesman refused to confirm or deny whether AOL was being investigated. An April 9 letter sent to a complainant and shared with The Associated Press said the department's Employment Standards Division was looking into the matter.

What constitutes employed work is key to any governmental inquiry into the matter, said employment lawyer Michael Karpeles.

He said such investigations typically look into whether individuals work according to a schedule, do work similar to that of employees, are supervised by employees' bosses, and receive compensation.

Ms. Hallissey, who volunteered from 1994 to 1997 for AOL, said in her letter to the government that volunteers were required to check in for their work, which was scheduled by AOL.

She added in an interview from her home in Greensboro, N.C., that when she posted a criticism of AOL management on a company online bulletin board, she was dismissed as a volunteer.

''The heart of the issue is that AOL didn't care," said Eric Wilson, a Cleveland, Miss.-based writer who is also one of the seven complainants. ''Some of us did think that the work that we did should have been done by employees."

Ms. Brackbill said volunteer work is coordinated by the company, since the company manages ''tens of thousands of chat rooms" and needs to organize the services of its many volunteers.

But she said the tasks performed by the volunteers ''are very different from AOL employees, and we would make sure of that."

Ivillage.com, an Internet company where 1,100 volunteers outnumber staffers by more than five to one, issued a brief statement Wednesday defending its use of volunteers.

''IVillage.com community leaders are true volunteers and not employees," the statement said. ''Our hope is that the Internet's participatory nature is not what's at issue here."

Seagate Reports Q3 Profit Above Forecasts

Seagate Technology Inc. Tuesday reported a third quarter profit that was above most forecasts and marked a strong rebound from the company's hefty losses a year ago.

Seagate, the world's largest computer disk drive maker, said it earned $82 million, or 34 cents per share, in the third quarter, compared with a loss in the same period a year ago of $129 million, or 53 cents per share. Earnings in the latest quarter were reduced by a $60 million restructuring charge.

Excluding that charge, Seagate said its third quarter earnings were 49 cents per share, above the estimates of most analysts who had predicted a 46 cents per share profit, according to the research firm First Call Corp.

The company said revenues grew 7.7 percent to $1.81 billion from $1.68 billion a year ago.

Seagate had no immediate comment on the strong rebound. A year ago, the company's results suffered from fierce competition, overproduction and sagging prices.

Seagate also said Tuesday that it is changing the way it does business in North America to delay revenue recognition until the product is sold by distributors.

Seagate shares closed up 44 cents Tuesday at $26.69 on the New York Stock Exchange.

EarthLink To Start High-Speed Net Service

Internet service provider EarthLink Network Inc. Tuesday unveiled plans for a new high-speed service enabling customers to ply the Web about 25 times faster than the speediest traditional methods.

The announcement is EarthLink's latest volley in the battle between major Internet service providers, such as America Online and AT&T's WorldNet, to make Web connections faster and more reliable.

EarthLink, based in Pasadena, Calif., said it would launch two months of market trials of digital subscriber lines (DSL) in southern California in early May and planned to roll out full commercial service this summer.

``We're beginning to satisfy the demand for high-speed Internet connections," Richard Edmiston, EarthLink's vice president of research and development, said in a statement.

Such ``broadband" access will allow customers to enjoy more multi-media features such as high-quality video and music.

Although signals are carried over regular copper telephone lines, DSL technology is faster than services using traditional modems because it configures switches to carry digital signals instead of analog ones.

The computer is also constantly connected to the Internet, doing away with the need to dial into a server and avoiding potential busy signals during peak hours.

''All Internet providers ultimately will work with the phone companies' DSL product," said Glenn Powers, an analyst with Cruttenden Roth Inc. in Seattle, Wash.

EarthLink said it would initially offer DSL to its members in Pacific Bell's service area for $49.95 a month. It did not mention if it would charge an installation fee, but prices for DSL equipment can run several hundred dollars.

Depending on the distance of the user from a Pacific Bell central office, the service will enable download speeds of 384 kilobits to 1.5 megabits per second, compared with 56 kilobits by the fastest analog modems, it said.

Other high-speed access options include cable modems, which use cable television lines to link to the Internet and ISDN, or integrated services digital network.

Analysts have said that, while cable Internet service is likely to become popular with households where many computer users already watch cable TV, DSL could find a niche in offices that are too costly to wire for cable.

EarthLink also offers cable Internet services in limited regions. The company's shares rose 75 cents to close at $90 on the Nasdaq stock exchange, but analysts said the rise was not linked to the DSL announcement.

High-Speed Web Connections Debated

Some of the nation's biggest high-tech companies are fighting over how future consumers will connect to the Internet using new high-speed data pipelines.

At a Senate Commerce Committee hearing Tuesday, America Online and another Internet provider complained that cable television companies won't grant their subscribers easier access to their new high-speed connection lines.

Cable companies, investing billions to improve their networks, want the government to continue allowing them to require subscribers of their high-speed lines to also pay for their bundled Internet service.

Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., promised after the hearing Tuesday to introduce legislation later this month requiring the Commerce Department to investigate and report its findings to the panel.

Senators indicated they are loath to interfere with the industry's burgeoning success but that they're also eager to avoid placing too much power in the hands of a few ''bandwidth barons."

''What we're discussing is what shape the architecture will be for future communications for this country," said John Kerry, D-Mass.

So-called broadband access over cable lines, with connection speeds dozens

of times faster than today's telephone modems, promises to further propel the economy's rocket ride already fueled by the technology industry.

Freeing consumers from the frustrating, sluggish performance of the Internet, high-speed connections will finally make possible new computer applications that include TV-quality video and better audio on the Web.

But the promise of these faster connections is marred by a potentially ugly battle among Internet providers, cable companies and local Bell telephone companies, all of which see an enormously lucrative industry maturing.

Steve Case, America Online's billionaire chairman, testified for the first time before Congress - wearing a suit and tie instead of his usual khaki slacks and denim shirt.

''Instead of offering consumers choice, cable is requiring consumers who want a high-speed cable connection to the Internet to buy the Internet service affiliated with a local cable company, even if they have another Internet service they like and want to keep," Case said.

With McCain's agreement to try to require the government at least to consider AOL's requests, Case walked away from his rookie appearance before Congress with a success.

But he drew a mild rebuke from Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., who cautioned that AOL, as the world's largest Internet provider with more than 16 million subscribers, could run up against antitrust laws because of its own dominance.

The cable industry contends it needs the money it generates from its own Internet services to help pay some of its costs of building a new national, digital infrastructure.

James Robbins, president of Cox Communications Inc., said Cox already has spent $4 billion to develop high-speed Internet connections over its cable lines, and the industry expects to spend $10 billion on similar upgrades this year.

He criticized Case's call for rules changes requiring cable companies to open their systems to other Internet providers. ''Call it whatever you want, a light touch or whatever, it will scare investment away," Cox said. ''If you even move in that direction, you will dry up the greatest hope for competitive telecommunications services."

McCain complained about excessive cable fees, which he blamed on a lack of competition among cable television companies.

Solomon Trujillo, president of US West, also complained at the hearing that local Bell companies are discouraged under federal law from building sprawling, high-speed digital telephone networks that compete with cable lines.

Trujillo wants his company to be allowed to transmit computer data across 197 geographic boundaries established by the government and the industry in 1982 to limit long-distance voice calls.

But Hollings held even sharper criticism for Trujillo than he directed at Case, citing figures showing that US West has 98 percent of the local telephone market in its region.

''You come up here with a straight face and talk about parity?" Hollings
said to Trujillo. ''This isn't about open access."

PC Makers Face Challenge From New Players

The personal computer, now at the height of its market power and
popularity, is about to face some heady new competition.

Starting this year, new Internet-connected machines will be hitting the
market in a wave, marking the first serious challenge to the mighty desktop
computer's dominance.

Even the laptop won't be safe as computing leaps onto so-called Internet
appliances: handsets, sophisticated mobile phones and television screens,
pushed by smaller, more powerful computer chips and the growth of the
Internet.

''The development and adoption of Internet appliances will explode during
the next 12 months," investment bank Hambrecht & Quist said in a new
report released last Friday.

Few in the high-tech industry will dispute that such devices are about to
make a big splash -- the only debate is whether the personal computer will
remain useful as the mother ship for the new devices or simply get lost in
space.

''The PC era is over," IBM Chief Executive Louis Gerstner recently declared
in a letter to shareholders, in a clear sign that the world's biggest
computer maker sees a serious challenge to the existing order.

But Hambrecht & Quist analyst Danny Rimer said, ''Contrary to popular
belief, Internet appliances will not replace PCs, but in many cases will
provide different services than PCs."

Gerstner, too, says don't expect PCs ''to die off, any more than mainframes
vanished when the IBM PC debuted in 1981."

Still, mainframes never held the same status after the PC took over and
much of computing shifted to stand-alone desktops. Now, the reverse may
happen. International Data Corp., sees purpose-built appliances surpassing
PCs as the main way to connect to the Internet and ballooning to a $90
billion market within three years.

The Internet's wide adoption is fueling momentum for almost any new
developments in high-tech. ''The Internet is as important to our future as
silicon was to our past," said Intel Corp. Executive Vice President Paul
Otellini, whose company has made more money from silicon chips than anyone.

With businesses gearing up for $1 trillion in e-commerce, companies are
increasingly aiming investments at the network, not the desktop. In homes,
where e-mail and the Internet are the killer applications, consumers are
also looking for more and better ways to connect -- slow-to-boot-up,
complicated personal computers might not cut it.

''What will happen over the next few years is that we will Web-enable
everything," IBM Internet division general manager Dr. Irving
Wladawsky-Berger said in an interview.

Set-top boxes will link televisions to the Internet, PalmPilot-type handheld computers will be sold with wireless modems to receive e-mail and mobile telephones will have Internet browsers embedded.

Gameboys and handheld electronic toys are being launched as Internet-ready devices. Home-based wireless networks, with backing of companies like Intel, also are becoming a reality.

''Putting an Internet connection inside a personal electronic device will be as simple as making televisions 'cable ready,"' IBM's Wladawsky-Berger said.

As a result, for the personal computer industry, the number of possible competitors grows by the day. Japanese companies like Matsushita Corp. and Sony Corp., the leaders in consumer electronics, see the appliance market as way to get back onto the cutting edge of technology, after slipping in the PC era.

In the fiercely competitive communications market, telecom companies may start offering inexpensive computing devices to consumers as a way to sell them subscription services.

AT&T Corp. acquired a majority of cable modem company AtHome Corp., mostly for its PC-based service. But AtHome is also working on a related service to convert televisions for Internet service. Microsoft Corp. made a similar move by acquiring WebTV, a service that links televisions to the Internet. It is also pushing Windows CE, a pared-down operating system aimed at keeping its systems relevant when PC's are not, and a ''light" browser for mobile Internet appliances.

But in a sense, the best placed to win in the communications era are those without any history in the PC business at all. Communication device makers, with less baggage to carry, could travel fastest in the post-PC era.

''Phones are getting more and more powerful, and they are connected direct to the network so they have a capability that's been lacking in laptops, said Dr. Irwin Jacobs, chairman of Qualcomm Inc., one of the leaders in sophisticated cell phone technology.

The opportunities for mobile phone makers to grow on the Internet inspired Qualcomm to end a long dispute with European phone makers, led by Sweden's Ericsson, and create a single technology for wireless phones.

That pact brightens the future for the telephone makers, and, with 400 million units already out in the field, their highly global base of users tops even the PC industry.

''PCs have kind of reached a plateau, in their level of sophistication," said Greg Blatnik of Zona Research, but mobile phones are just taking off. New models will have high-speed Internet connections that will be able to carry two-way color video, text and voice, from almost anywhere.

The only thing missing is a full-sized keyboard, though Qualcomm's Jacobs notes digital phone systems are already providing a base for voice recognition technology. ''So over time, people will replace desktops with more and more powerful phones."

Silicon Valley entrepreneurs are not standing by watching, of course. Venture capitalists are pouring tens of millions of dollars into start-ups

that are creating new products, and most major PC makers have
communications devices under development.

One company, MediaQ, has launched a business in making chips for PC makers
to build Internet appliances. Sunder Velamuri, MediaQ vice president of
marketing, sees PC makers shifting gears and become big players. ''We
think there is a huge market for them in the post-PC devices."

In one of the most watched device market start-ups, the creators of the
PalmPilot handheld computer bolted 3Com Corp., and began a start-up for
handheld Internet devices.

The company will not disclose its plans, but says it will have a major
product by year's end. Handspring business development director Ed Colligan
says start-ups like his will play a major role in the development of the
market.

''If you look at the history of computing, whenever there is a paradigm
shift, the companies that led the previous wave don't make the transition
very well," he said. ''Nobody owns the future here."

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